

SEPTEMBER 28, 1978

Mornings are cool enough to wear a light jacket. The cow work is still going on. We don't have many cattle to work, we are just slower than we once were.

A bug advantage of being a greybeard is that it's easy to act so pitiful that family and neighbors will come and help. About a month before the roundup started, I began to walk in a stooped position and on any public occasion hum that old lone prairie tune and bits of "Home on the Range."

Several times I mentioned to my neighbor Goat Whiskers the Younger that I wanted to leave him the brown four year old horse that's working out so well. Whiskers looked puzzled but he likes the pony so well that he was thrown off guard.

I've carried the act right on through. In the mornings, I ask Jose to saddle my horse. Jose is only three months younger than I am; however, I figure it's time for him to learn to respect something besides the length of a dance floor or the newest twist on a paso doble, like, for example, respecting his elders.

Self sufficiency is a mighty high sounding phrase from a speaker's platform. The grand old tradition of pulling yourself up by your own bootstraps is awfully touching to a graduating class. Stories of Mr. Washington packing a transit in the wilderness and Mr. Lincoln splitting rails are good for the young. But under short labor and short money conditions, I say that you'd better not turn down anything, from free food stamps to the free pamphlets that religious fanatics hand out from the street corners.

Yesterday an old kid was by the ranch looking for a job. He was shod in blue and white tennis shoes and riding a pale green Volkswagon with a bicycle tied on the back. His mother must have used a tall clothesline for a weaning wire, as his hindlegs and arms reached up and out for a long ways.

In the interview, he said he wanted to make enough money cowboying in Texas to marry a girl back in Colorado. After he said that, I was too softhearted to hire him. As far as the Shortgrass Country needs cowboys, I wasn't going to have it on my conscience that I'd caused a romance to either end in four weeks or be strung out over four centuries.

It would be just like that long legged kid to replace the love he had for that girl for a love of horses and leather. I can stand to watch a lot of life's tragedies unfold, but I couldn't stand the thought of a young gal back in Colorado banking her love on what a man was going to make of himself doing anything in Texas.

How beautiful the mornings are as we ride to the pastures. It's hard to act like a greybeard to the tune of shod horses and soft spoken Spanish. Foxes are beginning to grow thick coats and the carrion bird appears to be planning an early flight south. On days like this we could gather the world. I hope the boy makes it back to Colorado before the cowboy fever ruins his life.